

Sherborne Parish PC – Monthly Meeting Minutes

Held at Sherborne Social Club. 17th March 2026

Councillors in attendance: Y Blankley (YB), C Humphries (CH), E Richardson (ER), T Whiffen (TW), A Woolley (AW), Hannah Greyson-Gaito (HGG).

Apologies: S Challis (SC)

1. Public Surgery

Sewage: Ongoing illegal sewage discharges from the Bourton-on-the-Water treatment works — active for 61 of the last 75 days, including a continuous 1,000-hour discharge — are going un-investigated by Thames Water, whose £4m remediation programme has shown no measurable improvement and whose long-planned capacity upgrade remains indefinitely deferred.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- The Parish Council (PC) plans to coordinate with the Windrush Catchment Partnership and considering a joint letter to Thames Water with neighbouring parishes. AW to lead.

Minutes: The PC is operating without a permanent clerk, with minute production currently managed voluntarily by a single councillor. Concerns were raised about delayed production and publication of both minutes and agendas.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- Several practical measures were agreed to improve the timeliness of publishing agendas and minutes, including shared notice board responsibilities, and exploring an automated website alert system.
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2. Planning Update

Three planning applications were noted as having been circulated electronically in advance of the meeting:

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- All councillors to review circulated planning applications and submit any comments or objections via the relevant channels.
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3. National Trust Engagement

Sherborne's Walk / Lake Shorelines Working Group

TW and AW updated the PC on the proposed working group format for engaging the National Trust on the Sherborne's Walk / Lake Shorelines question. Terms of reference had been drafted and shared with the NT some months ago.

The NT has now responded, querying the decision-making powers referenced in the terms of reference and questioning the rationale for a working group on what they describe as a 'minor' subject.

Discussion centred on how to respond constructively:

- The PC's intent is not to have decision-making authority over NT land — but to provide a structured, transparent mechanism for community voices to be heard before decisions are made.
- It was agreed that the 'decision-making' reference in the terms of reference should be removed or clarified, as it contradicts the opening paragraph's stated purpose of sharing community views.
- The forthcoming bi-monthly NT/PC meeting (Thursday, this week, 5:15pm) provides an opportunity to address this directly. TW and AW to attend.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- TW and AW to attend Thursday's NT/PC meeting and lead on clarifying the working group's purpose, removing the 'decision-making' reference.

4. **Highways**

Highways Liaison Update

YB updated the PC following a productive meeting with Highways (Craig and Anne). Key outcomes:

- Craig is leaving his current role for a more senior position but has confirmed he will remain in contact and YB can reach him directly. His replacement has not yet been appointed; a bedding-in period should be anticipated.
- Grip clearing: The scheduled annual clearing has not yet begun (due to start in March).
- The Highways team has agreed to contact landowners directly about ditch clearance, as many ditches are the responsibility of landowners rather than Highways.
- An enforcement order is being sought for the ditch on the road coming down from Bourton, where water is creating its own course across the road and causing surface damage.
- The NT has been notified regarding walls in the village that are close to collapse, and separately about walls at the cemetery which are bulging. The PCC was also informed, though they indicated the walls are fine. YB will write formally to ensure the matter is on record.

Speeding – Data & Speed Cameras

YB updated on progress following the highways meeting:

- Anne (Glos Highways) has offered to provide YB with live speed data from black-box vehicle tracking systems.
- YB has been put in touch with the relevant officer at Gloucestershire County Council for definitive guidance on speed information cameras.
- The PC noted that any speed information camera — regardless of type — must comply with sightline requirements. Gloucestershire is actively removing cameras from villages where trees or other obstructions interfere with sightlines, even if a licence was granted.
- A recommendation was made to pursue police community speed monitoring (rather than volunteer-led speed checks, which were considered contentious) as a complementary measure.
- Road straps (vehicle-activated data-collection devices) were also suggested as a non-contentious option for gathering speed data.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- YB to receive and review speed data from Anne (Highways).
- YB to contact the GCC speed camera officer and, separately, community police, to explore monitoring options.

- All councillors and residents encouraged to continue reporting potholes via 'Fix My Street' — volume of reports directly influences prioritisation.
 - Dawn to notify YB when the outstanding pothole (pre-marked, not yet filled) meets the size criteria (plate-width, golf-ball depth) so it can be reported and escalated.
 - YB to write formally to record the wall concerns at the cemetery and in the village, addressed to the relevant parties.
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5. **Grass Verge Management**

ER is awaiting a response from Anna (village resident and wild flower expert) regarding the management of grass verges, including whether wildflower planting requires formal written permission. YB confirmed this is the case — written permission from Highways is required before any planting on verges.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- ER to follow up with Anna to arrange a meeting and clarify the permissions process for verge planting.
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6. **Empty Properties**

YB confirmed a report on empty properties has been submitted to Cotswold District Council (CDC) in response to a formal request from the CDC. Six properties were identified as priorities, including: Cat's Abbey Cottage (ten years empty), Sunnyside (across the A40), Sherborne Farm, Northfield, and one further property. Some properties are in active planning or repair processes and were excluded.

YB noted the letter places responsibility not on the local team at NT but on senior management and the relevant committee, who have not released the necessary funds. One property (Number 22) is nearly ready for letting. The decision to hold back on others is reportedly financial — the Trust is consolidating funds to address the worst properties together.

Separately, YB noted that the Renters' Rights Act, also expected in May, will require all rental properties — including older stock held by the National Trust — to reach EPC level C or demonstrate meaningful efforts to do so, with a minimum spend of £10,000 per property on insulation. This has significant implications for the NT's housing stock in the village.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- YB to monitor CDC response to the empty properties report and update the PC at the next meeting.
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7. **Emergency Planning Meeting**

YB confirmed the Emergency Planning meeting is taking place next week. The village hall has been booked. A working group has been convened drawing on representatives from Clapton, Farmington, Great Barrington, Little Barrington, and Windrush, as well as individuals with relevant expertise. The school has been included as one of the largest community spaces in the village.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- YB to confirm attendance and finalise arrangements for the Emergency Planning meeting.

8. Neighbourhood Plan Light

YB reported a conversation with Barbara (from CDC) regarding the government's forthcoming 'Neighbourhood Plan Light' framework, expected to be published in May 2026. This is a simplified alternative to a full Neighbourhood Plan, intended to address the cost and complexity barriers that prevent many parish councils from pursuing full plans.

The proposed framework would involve mapping the village boundaries, valuing and recording each community asset, and creating a structured record that provides similar protection to a Neighbourhood Plan, particularly in relation to planning decisions. Full detail is not yet available; the PC will await the published documentation before committing to any action.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- YB to monitor publication of Neighbourhood Plan Light guidance (expected May 2026) and report back to the PC.
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9. Community Matters

School / PTA Engagement

ER reported having been contacted by the school PTA about what more the Parish PC could do to support the school. The school has responded, though not in full. The PC welcomed the contact and agreed to follow up.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- ER to respond to PTA and explore what support the Parish PC can offer.

a) **Sherborne Village Cricket Match**

ER announced that a village cricket match has been organised to take place in front of Sherborne House on Sunday 28th June 2026. The match has the support of a number of the house's residents, who are enthusiastic about seeing cricket played on the grounds.

The match will be open to all and is intended as a community event. It is hoped it will replace or complement previous village fair-type events. The PC agreed to help promote the event.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- PC to publicise the cricket match — Sunday 28th June 2026, Sherborne House — via the website and notice boards.
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Next Meeting

Monday 20th April 2026